TC1504-13

RIGHT OF REPLY
OF THE INDONESIAN OBSERVER DELEGATION
UNDER ITEM 9
GENEVA, 27 FEBRUARY 1989

Madam Chairman,

At the outset I would merely like to state that what the previous speaker has been saying does not contain any new or different elements. The clarifications by my delegation have been given on previous occasions, both in this forum and elsewhere.

In responding to the same reference made by an NGO regarding East Timor, my delegation will state the facts mentioned below :

The question was asked that if self-determination has already been implemented in East Timor, why is it still on the Agenda and still being discussed in the Decolonisation Committee of the United Nations; the Committee of 24 ?

Those who are familiar with the United Nations system, particularly with regard to the non-self-governing territories, know that the road to self-determination, when implemented responsibly, is supposed to be smooth. But it can also be turbulent ; particularly when a colonial power simply deserts a former colony.

Portugal, as all members of the Committee know, simply abandoned East Timor and left a chaotic situation behind. Those who are familiar with the situation in East Timor as it was in 1975 will know that the Portuguese authorities did not simply withdraw from the island but handed over the arms of its Tropaz to one particular group who quickly assembled themselves into what became known as the FRETILIN. Ignoring all other political groupings, the FRETILIN then claimed to be the sole

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representative of the East Timorese people and this was the root cause of the ensuing problems. Having inherited the arms from the Portuguese, the FRETILIN started a bloody terror in attempting to subdue all other groupings. This resulted in thousands of East Timor refugees fleeing to Indonesian West Timor.

Fortunately, those who favoured integration were also able to organise themselves and as they represented the majority of political parties, Indonesia responded to their request for integration. Under the prevailing situation of that particular time, it was natural that integration took place in a democratic manner according to the traditional ways of the Timorese.

Additionally, Indonesia endeavoured to give assistance to the process of decolonisation. The Indonesian Foreign Minister met his Portuguese counterpart specifically to discuss how the two countries could ensure that decolonisation take place in a proper manner and what role Indonesian could play in the process. In fact, even representatives of FRETILIN were invited to the Macao Conference to continue the discussion of this matter. However, as history has revealed, the Portuguese left the island with the FRETILIN well armed, who instead of coming to Macao, seized power and claimed to represent the whole population.

The integration that did eventually take place came to be recognized by those countries most familiar with the developments and the resulting situation on the island. These countries included the Asian and Pacific nations, the ASEAN countries - in short - the countries in the region surrounding the island of East Timor.

As to why this matter is still on the Agenda of the Committee of 25, the answer is again with the careless attitude of the Portuguese. Portugal inflicted untold casualties and immense suffering amongst innocent people by irresponsibly abandoning East Timor on 26 August 1975, which was at the height of the civil war which Portugal itself had

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instigated. Furthermore, by abandoning East Timor, Portugal forfeited any moral or legal right to be considered as the administrative power of East Timor. Indeed, Portugal was coldly silent about its so-called responsibility to East Timor during the three long years from 1976-79. This can be seen by the fact that the relevant General Assembly resolutions failed to make any mention of Portugal as the administrative power during that era. It is therefore surely ironic that Portugal now pretends still to be the administrative power of East Timor.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.